

Romans

Romans Chapter Nine

Romans 9:1-5

February 27, 2011

This is lesson number 79 in our exposition of the Book of Romans.

The Theme of the Letter

Romans 1:16-17

“For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**, for it is the **power** of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the **righteousness of God** is **revealed** from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’ ” Romans 1:16-17

Title: Paul’s Sorrow for Israel

Who is Israel?

ISRAEL

“In Gen. 32:28 Israel was the personal name of Jacob. By the time we arrive at Exodus, Israel is the name of the Jewish nation (5:1; 12:3, etc.). Then we have the remnant of Israel (Isa. 46:3; Jer. 6:9), which is probably the elect within the nation. Israel meant at least three things within the OT then.

One of the most important passages in the Bible in defining Israel is Rom. 9-11, where Paul explains who the true Israel is and how God saves them. All through the chapters Paul uses the word Israel in two senses: Physical Israel (9:4, 6b, 27, 31; 10:1, 19, 21; 11:2, 7, 25) and true spiritual Israel (9:6a, 27 [by inference]; 11:26). Also the words "remnant" and "His people" are synonymous to the true elect Israel (9:27; 11:1, 2, 5).

Note the following outline:

- I. 9:1-13: The True Israel
- II. 9:14-23: How God Saves the True Israel
- III. 9:24-29: Gentiles and Jews Part of God's True Israel
- IV. 9:30-10:21: Gentiles Accept Christ; Jews Reject Him
- V. 11:1-32: If Jews Reject Christ, Has God Forgotten Israel? No.
 - A. God rejected most of Israel but the Remnant is the True Israel, vv. 1-11.
 - B. Their Rejection Brought the Gentiles into the Root of Israel, vv. 12-24.
 - C. Both the Remnant of Israel and the Gentiles are being Saved Now, confirming and realizing the promise that all Israel will be saved, vv. 25-32.”

DISPENSATIONALISM, TODAY, YESTERDAY, AND TOMORROW,

Curtis I. Crenshaw and Grover E. Gunn III, Footstool Publications, 1985

Pages 40-41

Romans

Last Sunday we took a broad view of Romans chapters 9, 10, and 11 in order to begin to interpret 11:26, “**And so all Israel will be saved.**”

You will not likely arrive at the correct understanding of “all Israel” if you ignore the context of “all Israel” in chapters 9, 10, and 11.

We will be working toward the answer to the question, “Who is Israel?”
If “all Israel will be saved” it is important to know just exactly which Israel that is!

Is ‘all Israel’ all the Jews of all time? That is not a possible answer because the vast majority of those who were born as Jews are already in hell.

Well then, is ‘all Israel’ all the Jews who are alive the return of Christ?
Some make that argument and I strongly disagree with that view.

So ‘all Israel’ must be something else entirely?

My belief is that ‘all Israel’ includes the sum total of believing Gentiles and believing Jews of all time [remnant] and together they [Jews and Gentiles] constitute the church and that there is nothing beyond the church in the purpose of God for His own glory.

When you read your Bible you really must answer this **question** and **remember** what you decided as you read your Bible:

The question is: Is the Bible is primarily about the Jews or about the church.

One view says that the Bible concerns itself primarily with the Jews and the scope of the Bible is OT times and prophecies about a future Israel interrupted by the period of the Christian church {a parenthesis} with the final climax of history returning to the Jews. This is the popular view being preached in most Baptist churches in our time.

The view that says the Bible is primarily about the Jews teaches that the church and Israel are forever separate. The Jews in the OT; then the church in the NT; and then back to the Jews in the ‘millennium.’

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The other view that says that the Bible concerns itself primarily with the church and that we have the embryo of the church in its types in the OT and that the explanation of the purpose of God is more fully explained in the NT Scriptures.

The true church is constituted of believing Gentiles and the remnant of believing Jews, all believers from Adam to the end of the present age.

In the context of Romans 9, 10, and 11 there are two Israel's. One is the nation of the Jews and the other is spiritual Israel, the church.

Your eschatology [last things] will interpret Scripture for you.

My eschatology is almost too simple. There is the 'present age' and the 'age to come' and that's about all there is to know about my eschatology.

At the beginning of each chapter: 9, 10, and 11 the apostle identifies himself with the Jews. He is truly in agony over their hardness of heart and unbelief.

In each chapter he proves his case with the OT Scriptures.

Today I intend to cover verses 1-5. To show you how much I have accelerated my exposition, Lloyd-Jones has seven sermons on verses 1-5.

At the beginning of his exposition of chapter 9:1-5, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones poses an excellent question.

How do we read the Bible? How often have we sort of 'read over' 9:1-5 so we could get to the meat of the chapter, election and predestination?

E.g., "Let me show you the absolute sovereignty of God and God's freedom of choice as to who will be saved." And we usually start at verse 6 and virtually ignore 1-5.

So L-J's question about verses 1-5 made me realize that I too had not appreciated the depth of the wisdom and knowledge contained therein.

So with God enabling us we will look at those verses today.

Romans 9:1-5

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I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, 2 that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, 4 who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; 5 of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.

What Paul says verse 3 is perhaps the most astonishing thing that a Christian could ever say: **“For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh...”**

How do we understand what Paul means by that statement?

Can he really mean that he, Paul, wished he could be a vicarious substitute for sin? Would that not contradict everything he has preached about the sufficiency of Christ?

I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying,

Is Paul making an oath here invoking the name of Christ to back up his words? I think that is a little too strong. Why?

The Pharisees were big on oaths. Swear by the altar, swear by the temple, swear by heaven, etc.

The Lord said “swear not at all; but let your yes be yes and your no be no.”

What Paul is saying is the same that he wrote in 1 Timothy 6:13

“I urge you in the sight of God ...”

I speak these words realizing that I am in the presence of Christ and I am not lying,
my conscience also bearing me witness

We each have a **conscience** given to us by God.
Call it our innate sense of right and wrong {2:14-15}.

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You should never go against your conscience. We will have more to say about the conscience when we get to chapter 14. E.g., Romans 14:23

But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.

But our conscience is not an infallible guide. The conscience can be **instructed** and the conscience can be **dulled**.

In 1 Corinthians 10 Paul deals with the conscience of Christians who were troubled about eating meat that had been offered as a sacrifice to pagan idols. Idols are nothing and the meat itself is not involved, enjoy it!

In the same way that the conscience can be correctly instructed so can the conscience be dulled by persistent sin.

You do or think a thing that you believe to be wrong and your conscience pricks you. Ouch! But if you continue to go against your conscience the thing will not bother you as much and you will become hardened against your conscience.

So we should always pay attention to our conscience and pay special attention to what Paul adds to what he says about his conscience.

my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit,

That is why the instruction about eating meat offered to idols is corrective because the Holy Spirit leads us to know what the truth about things that are indifferent.

2 that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart.

3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh,

In spite of how badly the Jews treated Paul and considered him to be a traitor and worse than that. Now Paul was one of those who believed that that ‘blasphemer,’ Jesus of Nazareth, really was the Christ.

In the face of pure hatred on the part of the Jews, Paul really loved his ‘kinsmen according to the flesh.’

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The word he uses is '*anathema*'. I could wish myself **accursed** from Christ, **anathema** from Christ. I could wish myself **reprobate** from Christ, from salvation, from eternal life with Christ!

The commentators offer a wide range of interpretations about what Paul is actually saying here. I will spare you many of the arguments that I have studied and tell you that I agree with the argument that says that a Christian could never actually wish that he were 'accursed from Christ.'

On the side of that interpretation we find the following explanations:

"I was on the point of wishing that myself were accursed from Christ for my kinsmen according to the flesh." A. T. Robertson

"I could wish, were the thing allowable and possible..." Charles Hodge

Paul is in anguish of soul because of the hardness of heart and unbelief of his countrymen. He does not actually wish to be accursed from Christ, but he says that he is so concerned about them if somehow or other... and he leaves it at that.

The only other example in the Bible of this kind of love by a mere man is Moses in Exodus 32:30-32

30 Now it came to pass on the next day that Moses said to the people," You have committed a great sin. So now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin."31 Then Moses returned to the LORD and said, "Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! 32 Yet now, if You will forgive their sin -- but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written."

What we have here in Moses and in Paul is their intense concern for the glory of God and the souls of men. They are as close to the mind that was in Christ Jesus when He gave Himself as an offering for sin, that others might be saved.

So knowing that he is in the presence of Christ, Paul sorrows for his kinsmen according to the flesh.

There is another lesson to be seen in Paul's statement about his kinsmen.

Notice that the Gospel separates and divides people.

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You can get along with almost anyone if you are willing to compromise the Gospel. That's what our pluralistic society believes. All religions are equally valid and, in effect, deny the integrity of Jesus Christ.

But if you refuse to deny Christ and His exclusive claims you will face rejection and even persecution.

Our President has gone to lengths to profess that he is a Christian. It is not for me to say if he is a Christian or not. It would help convince me absolutely if he were to say that Jesus Christ is the only way to God and that Islam and Judaism are not valid paths to heaven!

In Matthew 10:34-39? Jesus said:

Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. 35 For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; 36 and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.' 37 He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. 38 And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. 39 He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.

The Gospel causes division.

So Paul now has two kinds of brethren.

He has his 'kinsmen according to the flesh' and before he became a Christian that is the only kind of brethren that he had.

Now, as a Christian, he has brothers and sisters in Christ and you will notice how often in his epistles he addresses his 'brethren.'

Lloyd-Jones correctly points out that the entire OT economy is summarized in verses 4-5 of Romans 9.

4 who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; 5 of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.

Something important is predicated here and that is that you cannot understand the NT apart from the OT.

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Paul uses the OT to prove his arguments.

Now I insist that the NT must interpret the OT instead of the OT interpreting the NT and that is exactly what Paul is doing here. All of those things in the OT, what did they mean? Well, that is what Paul is explaining to us here.

... who are Israelites,

Why does Paul use the term 'Israelites' instead of 'Jews' or 'Hebrews'?

Let me briefly explain the distinction between these terms.

The term '**Jew**' is generally used to make a distinction between Jew and Gentile. Verse 24 of this chapter is a good example of how Paul uses the term. "...even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?"

In 3:29: "Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also of the Gentiles?"

The term '**Hebrew**' is normally used to bring out the fact that there were Jews who still spoke Hebrew and there were Jews who spoke Greek.

Philippians 3:2-6

2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! 3 For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, 4 though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: 5 circumcised the Eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; 6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

After the Dispersion of the Jews in the first century there were Jews who spoke Greek and they are called 'Hellenists.' You find that term in Acts 6:1

Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists,...

The term '**Israelites**' comes, of course, from the race of people who came from Jacob. Jacob wrestled with God and prevailed and God changed his name from Jacob to Israel {God strives}.

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Thus the term 'Israelites' applies to the people that God blessed with the law and the covenant sign of circumcision, dietary laws, and Sabbaths that set them apart from all other nations of the earth. The term 'Israelite' refers to the people as a whole.

That is why the term is significant and is what makes verse 6 so important.

**But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect.
For they are not all Israel who are of Israel,**

The same idea is expressed in the next phrase; **to whom pertain the adoption....**

Don't jump to the conclusion that we already know what 'the adoption' means because we have seen the word in 8:14-15.

14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out," Abba, Father."

In 8:15 Paul is referring to those who are led by the Holy Spirit who are genuine Christians. In 9:4 Paul is using the term in a general way.

That is why **context** is so very important. If you try to make a word mean exactly the same thing in every place it occurs in the Bible you will have all kinds of difficulties.

That is the problem with the interpretation that insists that "Israel" always means Israel after the flesh; the physical seed of Abraham.

Paul is anticipating what he will say in verse 6. They are not all adopted who appear to be adopted; they are not all Israel who appear to be Israel.

... the glory,

We could say more about **the glory** such as when God appeared to Moses in the burning bush, and the fiery pillar that led the people in the wilderness and the presence of God that Moses experienced on Mount Sinai, the tabernacle, and the temple.

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All of these things were expressions of **the glory** of God.

... **the covenants, the giving of the law,**

The subject of the covenants and the purpose of the law are very important and can be controversial.

Very simply, a covenant is an agreement. A marriage is a covenant between two people. A real estate deed is a transfer of property and is a covenant between a seller and a buyer.

God's covenants are different from covenants between men in this way: God's covenants are **unilateral**, that is one-way, from God to man. The reason that God's covenants are one-way or unilateral is because God does not need man's agreement in order to issue a decree or proclamation.

A careful study of your Bible will reveal that there are several covenants that God declared at various times in history. Moving through Bible history after Adam, God made covenants with Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Moses, David, and there are others.

Basic to my understanding of covenants is that God does not alter or change the way He purposed to save sinners by grace through faith.

We will not take up the debate as to whether God made a covenant with Adam; it is enough to understand that God spoke the essence of the covenant of redemption to the Serpent in the presence of Adam and Eve.

Gen 3:14-15

¹⁴ So the LORD God said to the serpent:

"Because you have done this,
You *are* cursed more than all cattle,
And more than every beast of the field;
On your belly you shall go,
And you shall eat dust
All the days of your life.

¹⁵ And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel."

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When God declared His covenant with Noah, He did not change what he had said about the Seed of the woman. God did not cancel the covenant with Noah when He later spoke to Abraham. When God gave the Law to Moses He did not revise what he said to Abraham. What God promised to David did not alter what He said to Moses.

Once more, we must interpret the Old Testament by the New Testament.

Jeremiah and the Lord Jesus spoke of a ‘new’ covenant.

Interpreters go astray when they try to make the New Testament {covenant} a modification, or change in the way God deals with sin.

They say, in effect, that because the Old Testament {covenant} did not work out, God had to devise a “new” way for men to be saved. They say the law system failed and **now** there is grace.

My dear brothers and sisters, if you believe the Gospel, it is the same Gospel that Abraham, the father of the faithful, believed. You have more details about the person of Jesus of Nazareth than Abraham did but it is the same message of Substitution.

Jesus said, “Abraham saw My day and he was glad.” [John 8:56]

The “new” covenant is not new in the sense that God devised a new method when He finally realized that the old covenant could not save anyone.
The new covenant is not God’s “Plan B.”

That is Paul’s case for the Gospel, that it is revealed in the OT Scriptures.

God was not frustrated because every man and woman from Adam to the advent of Jesus had failed and then He said, “Well, this law business is never going to save anyone, guess I’ll have to come up with a new plan.”

As silly as that may sound, that is exactly what many preachers are preaching.

The New Covenant is as old as God and is “older” than all the other covenants, if that is not too confusing.

The new covenant is only new as it is revealed to your mind and heart.

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The new covenant is what transforms you from law to grace.

It is the revelation of the New Covenant in regeneration that is new not in the chronology of its inception.

This should be quite clear from Galatians 3:16-17.

16 Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ. 17 And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect.

The fundamental covenant that God made with Abraham and repeated through Moses did not do away with the first one.

The point Paul is making is that the Jews had the great advantage of having the covenants and the giving of the law and as a people they rejected God.

... the service of God,

This is a most important point.

How should we approach God?

The Bible gives us stern warnings in the examples of how God dealt with men who presumed to approach God in their own way and not in the way that God prescribes.

Start with Cain and the sacrifice he offered that God refused. Jude calls it "the way of Cain."

Look at Korah and his three pals who confronted Moses and declared that they were as good as Moses and Aaron. God opened up the earth and swallowed them alive into hell.

Read 2 Samuel 6. All Uzzah did was take hold of the ark because the oxen stumbled and God killed him because he did not handle the ark in the way that God prescribed.

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I have a great concern for the careless way that many people use the name of God.
OMG!

The service of God involves worship in Spirit and in truth and reverential fear and awe.

Here is a recent example from a prisoner's Bible study; I was asked to comment on:

My response would be to say, "You frequently refer to Jesus Christ as 'J.C.' and the Holy Spirit as 'H.S.' While I am sure that you mean no disrespect to the second and third persons of the Godhead that is how it comes across to me and probably to others who might read your work. Using initials sounds too familiar and irreverent."

That said, I would try to be encouraging where it is appropriate.

... and the promises;

The promises refer to all the blessings promised in Messiah.
The reign of Messiah began when Jesus began to preach.

Mark 1:14-15

Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

5 of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came,

Paul is referring to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the great advantage that the Jews had in their heritage. Just remember what Jesus told the Samaritan woman, "Salvation is of the Jews."

**"according to the flesh, Christ came,"
who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.**

There is a translation issue that makes a difference whether Paul is saying that it is Christ, who is the eternally blessed God, i.e., Christ is God. Or is it God the Father who is to be eternally blessed.

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Only the RSV among acceptable translations makes it to be God the Father and not Christ who is referred to here.

... according to the flesh, is the Christ. God who is over all be blessed for ever. RSV

NKJV, NASV, and ESV are similar in ascribing deity to Christ.

Romans 9:1-5 is a model for why it is so important to study the OT.

Paul's case for the Gospel is made on the fact the Gospel is not a NT innovation but is simply what God revealed in the OT Scriptures.

I will close by reading our text from the Amplified Translation.

Romans 9:1-5

9:1 I AM speaking the truth in Christ. I am not lying; my conscience [enlightened and prompted] by the Holy Spirit bearing witness with me

2 That I have bitter grief and incessant anguish in my heart.

3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off and banished from Christ for the sake of my brethren and instead of them, my natural kinsmen and my fellow countrymen. [Ex 32:32.]

4 For they are Israelites, and to them belong God's adoption [as a nation] and the glorious Presence (Shekinah). With them were the special covenants made, to them was the Law given. To them [the temple] worship was revealed and [God's own] promises announced. [Ex 4:22; Hos. 11:1.]

5 To them belong the patriarchs, and as far as His natural descent was concerned, from them is the Christ, Who is exalted and supreme over all, God, blessed forever! Amen (so let it be).